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ABSTRACT

This review of the status of English language instruction in the Greek community of Cyprus provides an overview of the role of English in the society in general and outlines the status of English use and instruction in the educational system at all levels (elementary, secondary, higher, adult, and teacher education). Topics covered include: the characteristics and training of English language instructors, the type and availability of instructional materials, educational administration and planning in relation to English teaching, English instruction outside the state educational system, British and other international support, commercial opportunities related to English instruction, creative writing, language research, and other sources of information. The strengths of the current teaching situation are the general exposure and demonstrable value of learning English, the availability of trained and experienced teachers and inspectors, and the provisions for inservice teacher education. The weaknesses are the absence of secondary level preservice training, limited competence of primary teachers, inadequate time for instruction at all levels, lack of incentives for teachers, rigidity of the elementary-secondary teaching distinction, and the authoritarian role of secondary level inspectors. (MSE)

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ENGLISH TEACHING PROFILE

Country: Cyprus

Date: February 1986

GREEK CYPRIOTS

1. ROLE AND STATUS OF ENGLISH

The British ruled Cyprus during 1878-1960. They left behind an elite of public servants with a perfect command of English. The language is much in evidence on road signs, notices, government forms and in the media. The British military presence in the Sovereign Base Areas, the United Nations forces scattered across the island and the growth in the tourist industry mean that there is very widespread use of the language. It is often difficult for the foreigner wanting to practise Greek to persuade people to use it in conversation.

There is no university at present, but in June 1985 the Minister of Education gave a pledge that the Government was committed to establishing a university within three years. A student who wishes to proceed to any form of higher education must take further examinations in addition to the school-based leaving certificate. This has led to the mushroom growth of a private education industry since independence in 1960 to prepare people for these other examinations, principally GCE O- and A-levels. Since most of the examinations involve English, the majority of the private institutes (frontistiria) teach the subject. Besides the examinations for further academic work, there are competitive examinations for entry to government service, the police, the banks, Cyprus Airways, and most professions where English is important (most of the laws were first framed in English). A secondary school-leaver wishing to enter the business world will be at a considerable disadvantage without a working knowledge of the language. The latest Government of Cyprus survey in 1979 stated that graduates of

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English-speaking universities earned on average 28% more than graduates of other universities.

A department of higher education in the Ministry of Education was established in 1983 with a remit to design a single school-leaving certificate for all students, but nothing has been produced to date.

English is the medium of negotiation between the two communities and will have a vital part to play, as the main language of official communication between the communities, in the event of a settlement of the Cyprus problem.

2. ENGLISH WITHIN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

English is taught as a foreign language. Greek is the medium of instruction at all public elementary and secondary schools and at the primary teacher training college (the Pedagogical Academy). Of the other tertiary level institutions, the School of Nursing and Midwifery runs some Greek-medium and some English-medium courses; the Higher Technical Institute, the Hotel and Catering Institute and the Cyprus Forestry College are all English-medium and attract students from abroad.

English is taught from the fifth to the twelfth year of schooling. The provision in the primary school is very limited (40-80 minutes a week at ages 10 and 11), but this increases to four 45-minute periods a week for the remainder of a pupil's school career, with one or two extra optional periods a week in the fifth and sixth forms (grades 11 and 12, ages 17 and 18).

In the Pedagogical Academy, in the first two years, the provision is 90 minutes a week, half of which is methodology. In the third year, the provision is 45 minutes per week or 270 minutes for those specializing in English.

At the Higher Technical Institute (three-year Higher National Diploma, HND, courses in engineering) all classes are conducted in English. In addition, there are four hours per week of English language tuition in the first year, and two hours per week in the second year.

The in-service teacher training courses for teachers of English at the Pedagogical Institute are not all conducted in English, but much of the material published by the Institute is in the language.

Most of the Foreign Language Institutes' work is the teaching of English. The institutes are situated only in the major towns - Nicosia, Limassol, Paphos and Larnaca. A large proportion of the clientele is made up of urban schoolchildren. The Foreign Language Institutes, alone in the public sector, offer opportunities for students wishing to prepare for external examinations in English such as the Cambridge Certificates and the GCE O-level.

No literature is taught at any level except in private foreign language schools like the English School. Out of 2,750 people taking GCE O- and A-levels in 1984; only twenty-five took English literature.

There is no requirement for proficiency in English for entrance to Greek universities; candidates for civil service entrance, however, sit a government examination roughly equivalent to part of the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) Stage II examination (pre-Cambridge FCE). There is no examination in English in the final year of secondary school, though marks gained in previous years are taken into consideration for the pupil's final grade.

There is an 'evening gymnasium' for adults, with no leaving certificate, for some 50-70 learners in Nicosia, Limassol and Larnaca, where English is offered as one of the subjects.

In 1984, the Cyprus branch of the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) had just over 100 members. Regular meetings were held in Nicosia and Limassol. Successful national conferences were held in April 1983 and April 1985.

There are three inspectors of English for secondary schools and two for primary schools. In addition to the two primary inspectors, three advisers visit schools to assist teachers and also form a small curriculum development team. With KELT assistance the advisers have produced a basic English course covering the two years of primary English.

It is anticipated that heads of departments will be appointed for the 1985-86 school year. They will be based in the larger secondary schools and will have the status of assistant headteachers.

English for Special Purposes (ESP): Science, technical and commerce streams at secondary level (fourth to sixth forms) have an optional ESP textbook, but ESP plays a minimal part in secondary teaching. At the technical schools, where the time devoted to English is in any case shorter than in the other secondary schols, the subject is taught in exactly the same academic way without, for instance, demonstration of its relevance to equipment manuals etc. Part of the reason is that English teachers may be assigned either to secondary or technical schools and do not always welcome a posting to the latter.

Educational broadcasting: The BBC English television series, Follow Me, was screened in 1980-81, but not followed up in the classroom. Sixty 15-minute radio programmes (for the first, second and fourth year of school English), planned, written and acted with the help of the Nicosia KELT Adviser (Key English Language Teaching Scheme), were produced in 1978 but are now out-of-date and rarely used.

Most pupils listen to English on the radio and there is considerable choice. Cyprus television shows many English programmes for children and occasionally transmits language-learning programmes. There is no attempt to transmit such programmes during school hours but more and more schools are buying video recorders.

3. TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

Teachers are paid according to their posts, and primary teachers are on much lower scales than secondary teachers. The ambitions of many of the former centre on becoming one of the latter, a feat which they can only achieve by getting a degree or its equivalent.

Primary schools

All the teachers are Cypriot, graduates either of the Pedagogical Academy, Nicosia (three-year course), or of its predecessor the now defunct Greek/Turkish College of Morphou, or of the mainland Greek training colleges (two-

year courses). Some primary teachers have attended one-year diploma courses in teaching English in the United Kingdom, but without exception these teachers have sought promotion to the secondary sector on returning to Cyprus. The waiting-list is extremely long for promotion to the lower grade of secondary school teacher. There are now three advisers' posts doing useful work, but the absence of a differentiated salary scale may deter applicants. The problem is of course one of finance and status, and highlights dramatically the gulf between the primary and secondary levels.

Secondary schools

Broadly speaking, the older generation of secondary teachers began, after training in the English-medium (colonial) bicommunal Morphou College, in primary schools. They then moved into secondary education, achieving en route a period of training in Britain or in the US and perhaps a BA or MA. The younger generation, the under-forties, went to Greek universities where the course was broad enough for them to be considered capable of teaching Greek as well as English. This generation had no practical teaching training. Many of them, however, have visited Britain as British Council scholars - some ninety teachers since independence - and others have taken one of the Cambridge examinations or one of the RSA Certificates in TEFL. With the disappearance of the Commonwealth Educational Fellowship Scheme however, and the decline in the Technical Co-operation Training Programme (TCTP), fewer have gone on longer term courses. Virtually all secondary teachers of English in state schools are Greek-Cypriot.

Initial training of teachers of English

The Pedagogical Academy, founded in 1959 to replace the colonial, bicommunal, male and female teacher training colleges, trains primary school teachers. Prospective teachers of English have some specialization in the third year. Secondary teachers are required to have a degree only and no pre-service training is provided in Cyprus.

In-service training of teachers of English

Responsibility lies largely with the Pedagogical Institute (quite distinct from the Academy) but the tutor in charge relies very heavily on KELT assistance. The inspectors attempt a certain amount of ad hoc training which they link to their teacher-evaluation role.

KELT advisers organize school-based seminars and district seminars. The British Council also has a role in teacher education through its KELT organized Summer Course and its sponsorship of IATEFL.

At primary level, the two English inspectors and the three advisers have organized several seminars - again with KELT involvement.

At the Pedagogical Institute the major difficulties are that all staff are seconded, most courses are voluntary, and it does not function as a true Teachers' Centre with available facilities.

The Pedagogical Institute offers the following courses:

Probationers' Course This is obligatory for teachers moving from contract employment to permanent status. Teachers are released from their schools for one day a week.

Voluntary courses for secondary teachers These are five 2½ hour weekly seminars held in Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaca and Paphos. The theme for the 1984 seminars was 'Mixed Ability Teaching', and in 1985 'Writing Skills'.

Voluntary courses for primary teachers Five 2½ hour weekly seminars, as for secondary teachers. The theme for 1984 was a fairly general one - 'Communicative Methodology'. Future seminars will be geared to using the new books.

KELT advisers are involved in planning and teaching all these courses.

RSA TEFL courses have been held since 1979. Since then there have been two FE courses and three DTE courses but, unfortunately, the Ministry is not able to offer incentives to teachers. There is the feeling that additional qualifications will not be adequately rewarded. Most candidates for the RSA diploma have been from the private sector.

Regular monthly meetings of IATEFL (referred to in Section 2) are basically teacher training sessions. Council support has been the decisive factor in initiating and building up the association.

4. MATERIALS SUPPORT

Deviation from the textbooks prescribed by the Ministry is rare, even though this is theorectically possible.

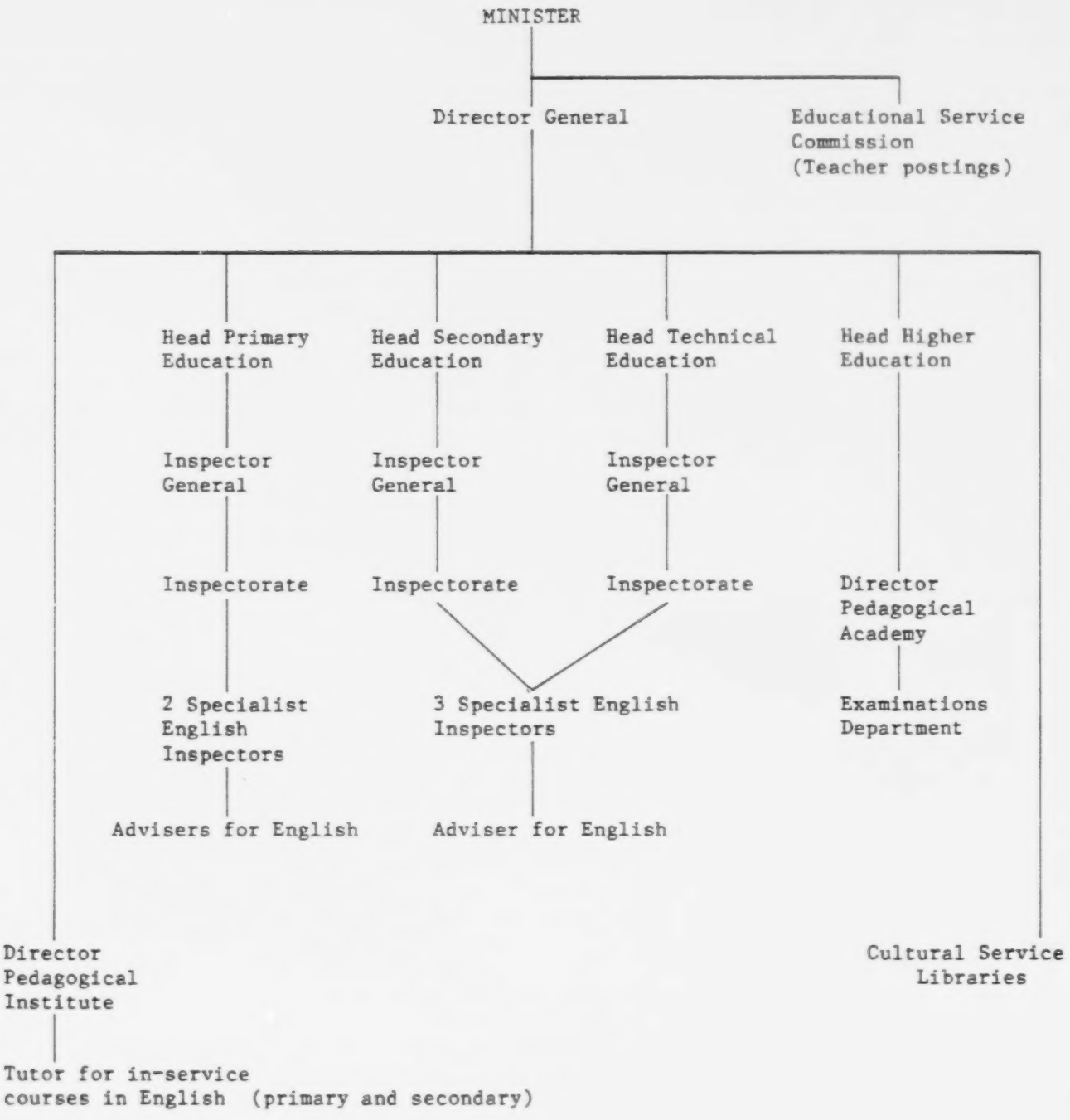
A new course for the gymnasium cycle of secondary education (lower secondary) was introduced in 1983 - TRACK Books 1, 2 and 3 (Longman). At the lyceum level (upper secondary) the prescribed books are Intermediate Context English (Macmillan) and Studying Strategies (Longman). Additional 'skills' material is used - Anita Pincas, Writing in English Book 3 (Macmillan) and locally-produced material for listening comprehension and reading development.

Cassettes that accompany TRACK are widely used and the listening material obviously makes use of taped material.

More and more schools are buying video facilities but video is not yet being used in any systematic way for English language teaching.

English books are widely available. Public libraries - remarkably for a country as highly educated and developed as Cyprus - scarcely exist. There are a number of excellent EFL bookshops and the Council library is very useful for those teachers living in Nicosia. Membership of IATEFL brings with it a reduced library subscription.

5. EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION IN RELATION TO ENGLISH TEACHING



6. DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING OF THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

The Greek Cypriot community looked to the Church and to Greece for its earliest education provision. Teacher training too, when it first began in 1893, was on the Greek model. The first British Director of Education, appointed in 1880, had initially difficult relations with the Church and even then there were two separate education boards, one for each community.

The British administration gradually tried to achieve greater direct control over education, to promote English, to establish bicommunal teacher-training and to limit the influx of textbooks and teachers from Greece favouring union with Greece. These effects had only limited success. The debate over the medium of instruction of the proposed university is not yet over. It seems likely however to be English-medium except for Greek and Turkish language and literature.

7. ENGLISH OUTSIDE THE STATE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Private institutions include both the full-time schools (those run as businesses and those on a non-profit making basis) with full syllabuses and extracurricular activities, and the institutes, or frontistiria, which are afternoon crammers preparing people for specific examinations only. Most of these examinations are British. The biggest entries are for GCE English, modern Greek and maths, and London Chamber of Commerce bookkeeping. State schools except in Limassol operate in the mornings; but in the main towns 80% of gymnasium pupils attend afternoon classes. Gymnasium classes, where those getting extra tuition are mixed with those who are not, are difficult to teach. Those who do not get extra tuition are clearly better equipped but the side range of quality of private tuition offered is reflected in these pupils.

The English School is neither part of the ordinary state system, nor a true private school. It has its roots in the British grammar schools, enters pupils for O- and A-levels, and for a long time enjoyed a special relationship with the British Council because it received British financial and educational support. This has now been phased out but the relationship remains amicable, with Representative being a member of the English School Board.

The best of the private institutes is probably the English Institute, which was founded in 1968 to provide an additional source of income for the English School. It has over 2,000 students. It offers a variety of academic courses, but most students study English. Courses go up to GCE A-level.

There are several full-time teachers of English with RSA qualifications and many part-timers. These part-time teachers are also recruited from local RSA courses - usually the DTE course.

The Government is now attempting to regulate private language schools. Teachers and other civil servants are no longer allowed to run private institutions; in fact, they are not allowed to undertake any private teaching. Staff working in private schools are now expected to hold qualifications equal to those required of teachers in the state system.

8. BRITISH SUPPORT FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

There were ELO/Aid to Commonwealth English (ACE) posts in 1964-68 and 1970-72 working with both communities. A Commonwealth Education Co-operation (CEC) post was converted to KELT in 1977-81, working with the Ministry of Education in the south. There is now only one KELT adviser post in the Ministry. There were eighteen CEC teachers of English in 1972; there are now none. There are no British volunteers teaching in Cyprus. The shift in British assistance to the advisory level is appropriate as there is a long waiting list for secondary teaching posts in Government-controlled Cyprus - perhaps 4,000, of whom some 600 are would-be teachers of English. Not all of these are waiting for a job or are even in Cyprus - you put your name on the list when you graduate as a kind of insurance - but enough are waiting for jobs to render help with recruitment unnecessary.

There is no British Council English Language Officer (ELO). Council-sponsored local summer courses stopped in 1974, but began again in 1979 (Limassol only) and in 1980 and 1981 there were courses in Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaca and Paphos with the help of visiting tutors. There were further courses in 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985. For the 1984 courses, the visiting tutor was Donn Byrne. These courses have invariably been well attended and have full Ministry support.

Support for ELT is now a prime function of the Council library. There have been several major ELT book exhibitions. During the IATEFL national conferences of 1983 and 1985 most of the major publishers exhibited ELT material using space made available in the library.

There is a scheme for circulating book boxes to schools. Boxes contain 100 simplified readers and are classified at three levels of difficulty. From time to time there are Council book presentations to schools and institutes.

Since 1980/81 the British Council has been engaged in direct ESP teaching. Up to the end of 1983/84 this was on a semi-experimental basis, but in September 1984 a formal DTEO was set up under a full-time DOS. This is at present a two-year commitment, but it is hoped to justify itself over a longer period. Courses have been held for doctors, lawyers, English teachers, banks, a hotel, an airline, trade unions and others.

9. AMERICAN SUPPORT FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

This is limited to presentation of the ELT journal Forum. Language teaching is not one of the half-dozen chosen information subject areas of the American Center library, nor are any of their scholarships specifically for teachers of English.

10. OTHER AGENCY SUPPORT

None.

11. COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

The market for book and equipment sales is small with a total school population of about 93,000, and the tightly centralized system does not encourage experiment.

There is a considerable market for British qualifications. 21,609 Cypriots sat for British examinations held under Council auspices in 1984/85, of which 3,000 were examinations directly testing skills in English.

There are no British commercial language schools represented in the island though some local institutes have a claim to links with British institutions such as Pitmans. There is little market for English teaching or GCE courses held in Britain because of the huge number of local schools offering such courses.

12. CREATIVE WRITING

There is virtually no creative writing in English, though there are one or two people (the secretary to the Minister of Education is one) who have published verse in English as well as Greek.

13. CURRENT RESEARCH

In the absence of a university, the only place where this could take place is the Pedagogical Institute. Mr Papagapiou there has completed a number of papers which exist in cyclostyled form and produces ELT abstracts from four English periodicals.

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15. GENERAL STATEMENT

The strengths are:

general exposure to and demonstrable value of learning English;

presence of competent specialist inspectors and advisers at primary level;

a nucleus of well-trained and experienced teachers of English in the secondary schools;

provision for in-service teacher education.

The weaknesses are:

absence of pre-service training at secondary level;

poor competence in English of many primary teachers;

inadequate time devoted to English at all levels of state education;

lack of incentives for secondary teachers to innovate or to obtain further qualifications;

unfair system of promotions - length of service is given undue weighting;

the counter-productive rigidity of the division between primary and secondary teachers;

the outdated and authoritarian role of the secondary inspectors.